

**U.S. Department of the Interior
Minerals Management Service
Office of Communications**

NEWS RELEASE

FOR March 25, 1997
RELEASE:

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**MMS Proposes Rule on Oil Spill Financial Responsibility
First Rule on Oil Spill Response Plan Also Issued**

The U.S. Department of the Interior's Minerals Management Service (MMS) today published a [proposed rule](#) to implement a financial responsibility provision of the Oil Pollution Act (OPA) of 1990. The proposal, which appears in the March 25, 1997, Federal Register, requires those responsible for offshore oil facilities to demonstrate that they can pay for cleanup and damages caused by facility oil spills. The proposed rule applies to oil exploration, production, and pipeline facilities located along and seaward of the U.S. coastline.

The proposal reflects recent changes to OPA that more precisely define the scope of the oil spill financial responsibility requirement in terms of geographic limitations, types of facilities affected, and the dollar amounts of responsibility that must be demonstrated.

"The OPA amendments clarify the original intent of Congress to focus financial responsibility requirements on offshore oil facilities in proportion to their pollution risks," said MMS Director Cynthia Quarterman. "This regulation protects the public interest without placing unreasonable economic burdens on the business community."

Public comments on the proposed financial responsibility regulation are due June 23. A final regulation should be published by the end of the year.

In a related action, the agency also published a [final rule](#) to implement the facility response planning provision of OPA. The rule, which supersedes an interim rule in effect since February 18, 1993, allows one plan to be used to cover multiple offshore facilities; this allows operators to reduce the cost of spill response compliance without sacrificing environmental protection.

The final rule also permits the use of the National Response Team's Integrated Contingency Plan Guidance when preparing a plan for MMS review. This guidance allows facility owners to consolidate multiple plans required by various agencies into one functional response plan, thereby minimizing duplication.

MMS is the federal agency that manages the Nation's natural gas, oil and other mineral resources on the Outer Continental Shelf, and collects, accounts for, and disburses about \$4 billion in revenues each year from offshore mineral leases and from onshore mineral leases on federal and Indian lands.

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